

from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services for the Commission.

(c) **STAFF.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Agreement should provide for the appointment of a staff and an executive director to be the head of the staff.

(2) **COMPENSATION.**—Funds made available for the Commission by the United States may be used to pay the compensation of the executive director and other personnel at rates fixed by the Commission that are not in excess of the rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of title 5, United States Code.

(d) **OFFICE.**—The Agreement should provide for the office of the Commission to be located in a mutually agreed location within the impacted areas of Alaska, the Yukon Territory, and northern British Columbia.

(e) **MEETINGS.**—The Agreement should provide for the Commission to meet at least biannually to review progress and to provide guidance to staff and others, and to hold, in locations within the affected areas of Alaska, the Yukon Territory and northern British Columbia, such additional informational or public meetings as the Commission deems necessary to the conduct of its business.

(f) **PROCUREMENT OF SERVICES.**—The Agreement should authorize and encourage the Commission to procure by contract, to the maximum extent practicable, the services (including any temporary and intermittent services) that the Commission determines necessary for carrying out the duties of the Commission. In the case of any contract for the services of an individual, funds made available for the Commission by the United States may not be used to pay for the services of the individual at a rate that exceeds the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of title 5, United States Code.

SEC. 6. DUTIES.

(a) **STUDY.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Agreement should provide for the Commission to study and assess, on the basis of all available relevant information, the feasibility and advisability of linking the rail system in Alaska to the North American continental rail system through the continuation of the rail system in Alaska from its northeastern terminus to a connection with the continental rail system in Canada.

(2) **SPECIFIC ISSUES.**—The Agreement should provide for the study and assessment to include the consideration of the following issues:

- (A) Railroad engineering.
- (B) Land ownership.
- (C) Geology.
- (D) Proximity to mineral, timber, tourist, and other resources.
- (E) Market outlook.
- (F) Environmental considerations.
- (G) Social effects, including changes in the use or availability of natural resources.
- (H) Potential financing mechanisms.

(3) **ROUTE.**—The Agreement should provide for the Commission, upon finding that it is feasible and advisable to link the rail system in Alaska as described in paragraph (1), to determine one or more recommended routes for the rail segment that establishes the linkage, taking into consideration cost, distance, access to potential freight markets, environmental matters, and such other factors as the Commission determines relevant.

(4) **COMBINED CORRIDOR EVALUATION.**—The Agreement should also provide for the Commission to consider whether it would be feasible and advisable to combine the power transmission infrastructure and petroleum product pipelines of other utilities into one corridor with a rail extension of the rail system of Alaska.

(b) **REPORT.**—The Agreement should require the Commission to submit to Congress and the Secretary of Transportation and to the Minister of Transport of the Government of Canada, not later than 3 years after the Commission com-

mencement date, a report on the results of the study, including the Commission's findings regarding the feasibility and advisability of linking the rail system in Alaska as described in subsection (a)(1) and the Commission's recommendations regarding the preferred route and any alternative routes for the rail segment establishing the linkage.

SEC. 7. COMMENCEMENT AND TERMINATION OF COMMISSION.

(a) **COMMENCEMENT.**—The Agreement should provide for the Commission to begin to function on the date on which all members are appointed to the Commission as provided for in the Agreement.

(b) **TERMINATION.**—The Commission should be terminated 90 days after the date on which the Commission submits its report under section 6.

SEC. 8. FUNDING.

(a) **RAILS TO RESOURCES FUND.**—The Agreement should provide for the following:

(1) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The establishment of an interest-bearing account to be known as the "Rails to Resources Fund".

(2) **CONTRIBUTIONS.**—The contribution by the United States and the Government of Canada to the Fund of amounts that are sufficient for the Commission to carry out its duties.

(3) **AVAILABILITY.**—The availability of amounts in the Fund to pay the costs of Commission activities.

(4) **DISSOLUTION.**—Dissolution of the Fund upon the termination of the Commission and distribution of the amounts remaining in the Fund between the United States and the Government of Canada.

(b) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to any fund established as described in subsection (a)(1) \$6,000,000, to remain available until expended.

SEC. 9. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **AGREEMENT.**—The term "Agreement" means an agreement described in section 2.

(2) **COMMISSION.**—The term "Commission" means a commission established pursuant to any Agreement.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee substitute be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 2253), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

ADJUSTMENT OF STATUS OF CERTAIN SYRIAN NATIONALS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to consideration of H.R. 4681.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4681) to provide for the adjustment of status of certain Syrian nationals.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise today to applaud the passage of a bill that will grant permanent residency status to a small group of Syrian Jews who fled the brutal dictatorship of Hafez Assad almost a decade ago.

In 1992, through negotiations between our State Department and the Syrian regime, President Assad allowed the last remnants of Syria's Jewish community to leave Syria. For years, this community faced religious persecution, restrictions on the right to travel and emigrate, and other forms of harassment. When Assad finally agreed to let them go, he insisted that they come to this country as tourists, rather than as refugees fleeing religious tyranny, in order to avoid the appearance that his repression had driven out a considerable number of his own citizens. We permitted this fiction in order to rescue people desperate for freedom, but obviously, the 2000 Syrian Jews who came here in 1992 were never tourists—they were seeking a permanent home and a life free of religious and political oppression.

Once safely in the United States, the Syrian Jews had no choice but to request asylum, and asylum was granted. But because of the long delays that asylees face in obtaining permanent resident status, the Syrian Jews still have not become permanent residents and gotten green cards. If they had come to the United States as the refugees they truly were, instead of as tourists, they would have become permanent residents years ago because there is no annual cap on the number of refugees permitted to move to permanent residency.

The Syrian Jews have suffered for years because of this situation, imposed on them by the terms of the secret 1992 deal with Assad. Without green cards, those among them who are doctors and dentists, as many are, are unable to practice their professions under the New York State licensing system. As asylees, the Syrian Jews face restrictions on their right to travel abroad. Finally and most important, the Syrian Jews have been stalled for years in the efforts to become full citizens of our country, something all of them ardently want.

This legislation corrects this anomaly and directs the Attorney General to grant permanent resident status to the Syrian Jews who came here in 1992. This will give this small group of people the immigration status they should have had years ago, but for the fiction that they were coming to the United States as tourists. It will permit them to begin practicing their chosen professions and moving toward full citizenship. It will finally effectuate the agreement by which they emigrated from Syria in the first place. Most of all, it will guarantee the full blessings of liberty to people who want nothing more than to live in peace in a land where the government doesn't mistreat you simply because of your religion.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 4681) was read the third time and passed.

STEWART B. MCKINNEY HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 5417, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5417) to rename the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act as the "McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act."

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, I rise today to ask the Senate to pass legislation that has been sent to us by the House of Representatives that would change the name of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This is one, small step we can take to honor a colleague who devoted his life to public service, particularly service on behalf of the most disadvantaged Americans.

Bruce F. Vento has been one of the most effective advocates on behalf of homeless people throughout his career. Mr. Vento was one of the first Members of Congress to bring the plight of the nation's homeless to the public's attention. In 1982, Bruce introduced legislation in the House of Representatives to create the Emergency Shelter Grant Program. He attached an amendment to a housing bill to provide matching grants to repair vacant buildings to be used as temporary shelters. This became the first national legislation to provide federal assistance for emergency homeless shelters.

Throughout the 1980s, Mr. Vento worked repeatedly, with his colleagues on the House Banking Committee, to raise the profile of this issue and to build the coalitions necessary to enact comprehensive legislation to help the homeless across this nation. In early 1987, Representative Vento worked to pass an aid package that included \$100 million for a program of emergency shelter grants to help charitable organizations and state and local governments renovate buildings for the homeless and succeeded in enacting the legislation into law.

In that same year, Congressman Vento was an original author of a larger, more comprehensive measure that became known as the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, the first and only coordinated federal initiative directed toward the problem of homelessness and the only social program that was passed during the Reagan era. The McKinney Act seeks to meet some of the immediate needs of the homeless: shelter, food, health care, education, job training services, and transitional housing through programs at HUD, FEMA, HHS, and the

Education and Labor Departments. This legislation continues to be at the heart of the federal government's response to the ongoing problem of homelessness in America.

It is indeed fitting to honor Bruce Vento by joining his name with that of his friend and colleague, Stewart B. McKinney, on this legislation. In 1987, after Representative McKinney's passing, Bruce took a leading role in seeking to name the programs that would serve persons who are homeless as the McKinney Act because of Stewart McKinney's "close association and concern and compassion that he espoused and reflected throughout his service" in Congress. We all recognize how well these very same words, which Mr. Vento used to describe Stewart McKinney, embody the work and career of Bruce F. Vento himself.

Shortly after taking office, President Clinton asked then-speaker of the House Tom Foley to organize a Task Force to look into the problem of homelessness. In February of that year, Mr. Vento was appointed as the Chairman of that Task Force, which issued a comprehensive, nationally recognized report to the Speaker one year later.

During the past few years, Mr. Vento continued to work hard on the McKinney Act. He added language that improved prevention planning and activities so that people do not become homeless due to lack of foresight or planning. The Vento prevention language added discharge planning requirements for persons who are discharged from publicly funded institutions, that is, mental health facilities, youth facilities and correctional facilities, so that people are not merely discharged to the streets.

Mr. Vento also introduced the "Stand Down Authorization Act." Created by several Vietnam veterans, Stand Downs are designed to give homeless veterans a brief respite from life on the streets. The Stand Down bill would, in conjunction with the grassroots community, expand the VA's role in providing outreach assistance to homeless veterans. In this Congress, H.R. 566 gained the strong support of over 100 bipartisan cosponsors, the VA, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the Disabled American Vets (DAV).

Bruce Vento worked throughout his entire career to improve and save the lives of homeless men, women and children around this nation. In the tradition of Minnesota's great leader, Hubert H. Humphrey, Bruce has always believed that we are elected to formulate and enact policies which improve the quality of life of our citizens. I have had the pleasure of working with him these many years to do just that. That is why I urge you to join me in enacting into law this legislation to rename our nation's fundamental homeless statute the McKinney-Vento Act. This act will duly honor a colleague who has worked long and hard for the

most vulnerable Americans, people who are without a home to call their own.

Mr. President, while this legislation deals with homelessness, I want to make it clear that Mr. Vento's interests and accomplishments go far beyond this important area. He was one of the strongest proponents of FHA in the Congress. He understood how FHA has been a crucial tool in helping millions of families attain the dream of homeownership in America.

Mr. Vento played an active role in helping craft the bipartisan public housing reform legislation that passed in 1998. He was a leader in the effort to preserve affordable housing that has been threatened by expiring use restrictions or rental assistance contracts. Important progress as made on this front last year. He was a strong supporter of the effort to increase and strengthen community-based non-profits in their efforts to develop affordable housing and revitalize our communities.

Mr. Vento has been a longstanding supporter of the Community Reinvestment Act, CRA, because he understood how access to capital for homeownership and small businesses is the key to ensuring equal opportunity for all Americans, regardless of the neighborhoods they live in or their economic status. I was privileged to work closely with him to preserve CRA during the debate on financial services modernization legislation.

Finally, Mr. Vento was a strong supporter of consumer protection laws, from the Fair Credit Reporting Act, to the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, to the Home Ownership Equity Protection Act.

Renaming the McKinney Act is one small way that all of us can honor Mr. Vento's memory. Mr. President, Bruce Vento will be sorely missed in the Congress of the United States. I want to join President Clinton, my colleagues, and many others in expressing my deepest sympathies to Mr. Vento's family and friends.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 5417) was read the third time and passed.

NATIONAL POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE YOUTH ENVIRONMENT ACT OF 2000

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 3235, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3235) to improve academic and social outcomes for youth and reduce both